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**Office of Community Development**  
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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

Oct. 28, 2015

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## **Louisiana Vies for National Disaster Resilience Competition Funds**

BATON ROUGE -- Louisiana is in competition for part of \$1 billion made available by the Department of Housing and Urban Development for storm-related projects designed to make communities more resilient against future shock.

The National Disaster Resilience Competition involves a two-phase process over the course of a year, and is open to cities, counties and states with presidentially declared disasters in 2011, 2012 and 2013. Although \$180 million is earmarked for Hurricane Sandy affected-areas, the remaining \$820 million will be awarded to NDRC winners nationwide.

Louisiana, one of 40 entities advanced by HUD to the final round, focused its application on those areas declared most impacted in August 2012 by Hurricane Isaac in Lafourche, Plaquemines, St. John the Baptist and Terrebonne parishes.

Louisiana's application lays out a development strategy combining the world-class science behind the state's Coastal Master Plan with the community-building planning and policy techniques the state has honed over its decade-long post-Katrina recovery efforts.

The policy framework is called Louisiana Strategic Adaptations for Future Environments, or LA SAFE. The purpose of LA SAFE is to plan for and implement safer, stronger and smarter development strategies in development zones of hurricane impacted areas of the state.

"To give Louisiana the best chance of success for this application, we have engaged governments and stakeholders at every level in our four target areas, as well as other NDRC applicants within Louisiana and around the country," said Pat Forbes, executive director of the Louisiana Office of Community Development-Disaster Recovery Unit. "Because of the deep local involvement and regional cooperation in the process, whatever the outcome of this competition, the end result is going to be a more resilient future for the state and its people."

Eleven projects are included in the state's application, totaling more than \$767 million. The application seeks \$421,551,143 in federal funds from HUD, with the remaining \$365 million from private and other

philanthropic sources. One project covers all eligible NDRC areas; four projects are located in St. John the Baptist Parish; three in Terrebonne Parish; one in Plaquemines Parish; and two projects straddle Plaquemines, Terrebonne and Lafourche parishes.

Louisiana's largest proposed project stretches across Plaquemines, Terrebonne and Lafourche parishes and pursues a "multiple-line-of-defense" approach to resiliency. The \$481.2 million Coastal Nonstructural Mitigation project aims to reduce storm-surge impacts with a combination of moving structures out of harm's way and elevations.

"We are losing our coastline from storm surge, subsidence and sea level rise," said Lafourche Parish President Charlotte Randolph. "Traditional methods of reducing flooding such as levees and floodwalls are simply not enough. We need alternatives to structural protection, either by accommodating floodwater, removing structures from harm's way, hardening buildings and infrastructure through elevations and flood proofing, or a combination of all. This project will accomplish that goal."

As a result of the vulnerable location of its well system on the east bank of St. John the Baptist Parish, Hurricane Isaac left most of the area without potable water for days. The proposed \$84.8 million Water Works, one of four parish projects, will reshape the water supply with a series of pumping stations and water mains.

"The utilities department was forced to cut water service to the city of LaPlace for four days to avoid system contamination from Hurricane Isaac," said St. John the Baptist Parish President Natalie Robottom. "And flooding at wastewater treatment plants resulted in sanitary sewer overflows, leaving many communities without service for days. This project will protect the health of our residents and the natural environment by entirely reshaping our parish water management system."

With the coast of Louisiana rapidly eroding, the lowland Choctaw Native American communities of Isle de Jean Charles in Terrebonne Parish are in desperate need of relocation. The proposed \$48 million Resettlement project, one of three projects in the parish, will develop a resettlement model that is scalable and mindful of cultural and social networks.

"Until recently, the Isle de Jean Charles Native American tribe's self-sufficiency and adaptability were strong and allowed most tribal families to remain on the site called 'The Island'," said Terrebonne Parish President Michel Claudet. "But with the loss of more than 98 percent of the land, resettlement is inevitable. This project will be a model of climate change resettlement, with tribal livelihoods enhanced by innovation, teaching and sharing activities that keep cultural traditions alive because the tribe will live in one community, rather than scattered as they now are."

As land loss increases over time, it is important for Plaquemines Parish to consolidate development to reduce its footprint. The proposed \$46.9 million Polders project will create natural barriers around low-lying tracts of land beside the Mississippi River suitable for future development along this vital economic corridor.

"Several oil and gas refineries are located in the coastal areas of our parish and interruption of these operations due to flooding causes significant local, regional and national economic impacts," said Plaquemines Parish President Amos Cormier, Jr. "Creating polders is a Dutch flood risk reduction

strategy to protect critical functions in the flood-prone area by dividing the area into compartments with dikes. This project will promote the long-term social and economic sustainability of our coast.”

Phase I of the NDRC application closed March 16. It focused on framing recovery needs, identifying risks and community development opportunities in the target geographic areas. Phase II, which closed Oct. 27, focused on developing strategies that address the risks, vulnerabilities and community development opportunities identified in Phase I.

HUD will review the Phase II applications of all 40 entities through the end of the year and announce the successful proposals and awards in early 2016. Should Louisiana be successful, project implementation will shortly follow.

*The Disaster Recovery Unit within the Office of Community Development is dedicated to helping Louisiana's citizens recover from hurricanes Katrina, Rita, Gustav, Ike and Isaac. As the state's central point for hurricane recovery, the OCD-DRU manages the most extensive rebuilding effort in American history, working closely with local, state and federal partners to ensure that Louisiana recovers safer, stronger and smarter than before.*

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